

## Message Text

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TAGS:PFOR CH US

SUBJECT: KRAFT ARTICLE ON CHINA

FOLLOWING ARTICLE BY JOSEPH KRAFT APPEARED IN "WASHINGTON  
POST" FEBRUARY 6, 1977:

BEGIN TEXT:

NO DAY SEEMS TO GO BY WITHOUT THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION'S  
PUTTING ONE IN THE EYE OF THE CHINESE REGIME. TO MAKE  
MATTERS WORSE, THE SLIGHTS ARE INADVERTENT, SPRINGING FROM  
NEGLIGENCE OF CHINA AND ITS RECENT TROUBLES IN FAVOR OF  
MORE EXCITING PROJECTS.

BUT DESPITE PEKING'S RECENT FALL FROM GRACE, THE UNITED  
STATES HAS NO INTEREST IN LETTING THE CHINA CONNECTION  
LAPSE. SO WASHINGTON OUGHT TO GRAB AT AN OVERTURE--RE-  
VEALED HERE FOR THE FIRST TIME I THINK--THAT WOULD KEEP  
SINO-AMERICAN BUSINESS TICKING ALONG INNOCUOUSLY WHILE  
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CHINA TRAVERSED ITS PRESENT PERIOD OF INTERNAL UNREST.

THE SINO-AMERICAN CONNECTION HAS OPERATED ON TWO LEVELS  
EVER SINCE PRESIDENT NIXON'S VISIT HERE FIVE YEARS AGO.

THERE HAS BEEN THE STRATEGIC LEVEL, BASED ON THE NIXON-  
KISSINGER CONVICTION THAT, BY RAPPROCHEMENT WITH CHINA,

WASHINGTON COULD SQUEEZE CONCESSIONS OUT OF MOSCOW.

THAT CONCEPT HAS BEEN BADLY STRAINED, IF NOT DISCREDITED, DURING THE PAST YEAR. THE DEATHS OF CHOU EN-LAI AND MAO TSE-TUNG THRUST THIS COUNTRY INTO AN AS YET UNRESOLVED LEADERSHIP STRUGGLE.

POLITICAL DIFFICULTIES COMBINED WITH NATURAL DISASTERS, ESPECIALLY THE TANGSHAN EARTHQUAKE, TO WIPE OUT PARTS OF THE ECONOMY. CHINESE OFFICIALS HERE ACKNOWLEDGE THAT RAIL TRANSPORT, STEEL PRODUCTION, COAL MINING AND EVEN AGRICULTURE ARE IN TROUBLE. SOME CHINESE ARE GOING HUNGRY, AND IN THE POORER RESTAURANTS PEOPLE SCAVENGE FOR LEFT-OVERS ON DIRTY PLATES.

CHINA'S CURRENT PREOCCUPATION, ACCORDINGLY, IS OVERWHELMINGLY INTERNAL. PEKING CANNOT PLAY AN ACTIVE ROLE IN THE GREAT POWER GAME--CERTAINLY NOT AS A BIG COUNTERWEIGHT TO MOSCOW.

THE OTHER STRAND LINKING THE UNITED STATES AND CHINA IS BILATERAL. IT CENTERS AROUND THE REGIME IN TAIWAN, WHICH CLAIMS TO BE THE LEGITIMATE GOVERNMENT OF CHINA. UNDER THE SHANGHAI COMMUNIQUE OF 1972, PRESIDENT NIXON ABANDONED THE VIEW THAT THERE COULD BE TWO CHINAS--ONE ON TAIWAN, ANOTHER ON THE MAINLAND. IN SPIRIT, IF NOT IN THE SMALL PRINT, THE COMMUNIQUE GAVE THE IMPRESSION WASHINGTON WOULD FOSTER THE EVENTUAL RETURN OF CONTROL OF TAIWAN TO THE MAINLAND.

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BUT DELIVERING THESE IMPLICIT COMMITMENTS PROVED POLITICALLY DIFFICULT--ESPECIALLY AFTER RONALD REAGAN AND THE RIGHT WING BEGAN TO CHALLENGE PRESIDENT FORD FOR THE REPUBLICAN NOMINATION. THE FORD ADMINISTRATION WAS OBLIGED TO PUT THE CHINA ACCOUNT ON THE SHELF WHERE IT WAS LANGUISHING WHEN CARTER CAME TO OFFICE.

THE NEW ADMINISTRATION HAD LOTS OF FOREIGN BUSINESS IT WANTED TO-DO FIRST. IT SOUGHT TO ALLOCATE A BLOW TO CHINA, WEAPONS DEVELOPMENT WITH THE SOVIET UNION--A BLOW TO CHINA, WHICH REGARDS RUSSIA AS PUBLIC ENEMY NO. 1. IT FAVORED PULLING TROOPS OUT OF SOUTH KOREA AND RECOGNIZING

VIET-NAM--TWO MORE BLOWS TO CHINA, SINCE RUSSIAN INFLUENCE IS STRONG IN BOTH THE KOREAN AND VIETNAMESE PENINSULAS.

IN ADDITION, THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION BY AN ORGY OF PROJECTED FOREIGN TRAVEL EXPRESSED SPECIAL INTEREST IN THE

EUROPEAN ALLIES AND JAPAN, IN PANAMA AND LATIN AMERICA, IN

AFRICA AND THE MID-EAST. CHINA, AS ONE AMERICAN DIPLOMAT  
HERE ACKNOWLEDGED, WAS "OBVIOUSLY AT THE BOTTOM OF CARTER'S  
AGENDA."

THE SLIGHT HAS NOT ESCAPED THE CHINESE. THEY CALLED  
CARTER, IN ONE RECENT REFERENCE, A "LANDLORD." THEY HAVE  
VISITED SMALL INDIGNITIES UPON AMERICAN DIPLOMATS HERE--  
LIKE REFUSING LETTERS BECAUSE STAMPS BEARING THE PICTURE  
OF CHOU EN-LAI HAD BEEN PASTED ON SIDEWAYS.

BUT THE CHINESE LEADERS KNOW THEY CANNOT PLAY IN THE  
DIPLOMATIC BIG LEAGUES NOW, AND THEY SEEM TO UNDERSTAND  
THAT THERE WILL BE NO EARLY AMERICAN DESERTION OF TAIWAN.  
SO THEY HAVE PROPOSED DISCUSSIONS ON A TECHNICAL ISSUE  
THAT WOULD KEEP THE CONNECTION ALIVE UNTIL MORE ACTIVE  
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COOPERATION PROVED POSSIBLE.

THE TECHNICAL ISSUE HAS TO DO WITH ASSETS FROZEN IN BOTH  
COUNTRIES THREE DECADES AGO. THESE WOULD HAVE TO BE  
UNFROZEN IN ANY FINAL NORMALIZATION OF RELATIONS. THE  
CHINESE PROPOSAL--MADE BY VICE PREMIER LI HSIEN-NIEN TO  
VISITING AMERICANS--IS TO GET THOSE DISCUSSIONS STARTED  
NOW AT A LOW LEVEL.

THE PROPOSAL IS UNDOUBTEDLY AN INGENIOUS ONE. TOM GATES,  
THE HEAD OF THE AMERICAN MISSION HERE, IS EAGER TO GET  
GOING. BUT WASHINGTON IS HANGING BACK.

FOR NO GOOD REASON THAT I CAN SEE. STARTING THE TALKS  
COSTS NOTHING AND COMMITS NOTHING. IT KEEPS THE DOOR OPEN  
TO FUTURE REVITALIZATION OF THE RELATIONS BETWEEN WASH-  
INGTON AND PEKING. WHATEVER CHINA'S PRESENT LOW ESTATE,  
THAT CONNECTION IS SURE TO BECOME IMPORTANT AGAIN--IF  
ONLY AS A WAY OF TYDING DOWN SOVIET FORCES ON TWO FRONTS.

END TEXT.  
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## Message Attributes

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